that invasion took place which we had seen in preparation in the village of Chaguaral. Unfortunately moths got into it and ruined it, and I had no other recourse but to throw it out since it was no longer worth sending to Italy together with some skulls and other objects I had collected. 727

This custom of scalp taking is common to all the Indians hereabouts, and is also indulged in by those living in North America. The strange thing is that it was also practiced by the Scythians.

The Germans also were in the habit of drinking from the skulls of their fallen enemies. Who does not know about Albuin the Longobard who made his wife Rosamund drink from her father's skull some 1300 years ago? [71]

This Indian practice reminds me of something which, in my opinion, reflects the sagacity of these savages:

I was with the colonel of the regiment which was on duty on the frontier, on one of his periodic visits. Near a fort where an Indian tribe was camped the son of the general chief came to see him, (the chief himself did not make an appearance since he wished the colonel to call on him first) and made us a present of some very good and delicious aloja. As it happened that he had just returned from a raid upon the Tobas we asked him if he had not brought back a few scalps. The Indian, as though seeking an excuse for his cruelty said: "The Tobas take the scalps of white men and we take the scalps of the Tobas."

On this same occasion, seeing me dressed in the manner of country people, surrounded by army officers and standing beside the colonel who treated me with great consideration and respect, the Indians whispered among themselves: "Who do you suppose this one is?" And the more sophisticated answered "he must be some president or other!"

It seemed to me as I heard this idle chatter and banter that I was in the midst of a thickly crowded mass of our own lower classes.

[196] One of the superstitions among these Indians is to sally forth on their raiding expeditions with the new moon. They appear to attribute some magical virtue to it, yet they do not 721 821

M 192 463 indicates "possession" or "deposit"; gúu indicates "make," "maker"; kiá is "means," that is that which is used to procure something. for example: "fish" is yacq-set; "fisherman," yacq-set-quiá; "arrow" is lutek; "arrow maker" lutek-guú; "arrow owner," lutek-ʾhi. By virtue of this same particle, the first time they saw a trunk and a bird cage they called them, and still call them, imai-hi, that is, "clothes keeper"; huen-tié-hi, that is, "bird keeper."

M 286 One of the more advanced industries is that of weaving for which, as I have already reported, they do not use a shuttle but a broad piece of wood about a hand's breadth long with which they press the wool by hand. Another industry is the making of nets M [415] which are often as long as fifteen or twenty meters. Of all their belongings, however, nothing is superior to their bags, which are elegant and made to be very elastic. According to their contents these bags can stretch to an extraordinary size without the mesh's M [531] opening too widely and thus allowing the objects to fall out. They habitually decorate them with patterns, mostly geometrical ones such as parallel lines, triangles and squares.

M 396 The canoe making craft deserves special mention. They are made from a single trunk of the large and corklike yuchan tree which they hollow out roughly and then launch.

M 412 The tools which those savages use are the shells of a kind of large oyster or clam which abounds in the Chaco lakes. They also use jaguar teeth, hard wood, and the jaws of fish such as the palometa, with which they shave their heads and the little hair which grows on their faces.

M 323 [214] Not only are they not ignorant of the ceramic art, but it is in this one art that they most closely approach us in quality.

C M 323 ● 171 Cooking must have contributed much to the discoveries of this industry, but Indian piety regarding the dead is what has determined the major advances and relative progress in the art. It is precisely the Matacos, Tobas, Chunupis and others who do not bury their dead in ceramic vessels who have only rough, unpolished cooking pots, while the Indians who live in Santiago, and the Chiriguanos of Bolivia, although they do have small imperfect jars, have others which are very carefully polished, painted and decorated with small raised nubs, in the largest and most beautiful of which they deposit their dead.

261
or of waging war, coupled with an iron constitution, allows them 147
to stuff themselves like gunny sacks.

A remarkable thing! Be it because of racial relationship, 261
be it rather because of the great similarity in their way of life, 171
the fact is that this same pendulum-like swing between extreme 147
frugality and enormous voracity is also to be found among the gauchos, and all the other inhabitants of the Argentine non-urban areas in general, not excluding other peoples of the earth who live in similar social conditions. So true is it that the same causes produce the same results regardless of where they happen to occur.

These Indians are very jealous of their equality. They do 554
not allow others to surpass them and the women are the first to attack any of their companions who, either because of natural gifts or the husband's ability, find themselves approaching a favorable position.

I cannot forget a bitter disillusion which fell to my lot on 556
one occasion. Tajo, my Mataco language teacher, has a wife 123
who is an extraordinarily beautiful Gypsy type and looks, at a distance, like one of the more beautiful women of Buenos Aires. The husband was very much in love with her and I thought that I could not do less than to make her a present of a few cheap trinkets and garments. The husband added a few more things to my gifts and so the young woman was able to dress herself up in a manner unrivaled in the area.

As soon as she went out to show off her finery before her friends, dressed in her brightly colored clothes, she was received with admiration, but also with cries of protest.

I, who have often been led to sin in the direction of artistic platonism, wished to see the Mataco beauty in her new regalia and felt I had a certain right to [223] demand to be allowed to do so, but I found that it was not possible. The chief had forbidden her to wear her gifts because the other squaws had complained that her luxurious attire detracted from their own value; and so the young matron had been obliged to distribute her clothing among the others and to keep just a few scraps for herself which she would wear only every now and then, and then not openly.

Even among the savages one must adhere to sumptuary laws!

Chapter VII

Gender, Number, case, syncopation. Article?

a. Gender

It does not seem to me that the nouns have gender -- only in pronouns and in demonstrative adjectives are there to be found certain changes which make me suspect a gender differentiation. Yet this goes no further than the merest suspicion.

Withal, they do suffix the ending tziná to the names of female animals, which means "female," and, when used alone and not attached to another word, means "woman"; for example, "mare" is yélaiáj-tziná. In order to indicate a male animal they usually add asnáj, which actually means "male."

b. Number

I was so sure that these inhabitants of the Chaco must possess a plural formed by the joining or placing in close proximity of some word indicative of the concept of plurality, such as "much" or some other like word, that I was for ever in search of it. Actually there was nothing unnatural about such an idea -- the Guaraní Indians do in fact use such a linguistic device, heta, which placed beside a singular immediately imparts plurality to it; the Quichuas also do likewise by suffixing cuna, and these two nations of Indians are or were neighbors of the Matacos. Many other peoples use the self same artifice which is called agglutination; the Akka of Africa do so too.

It seemed therefore quite natural that the smaller should follow in the footsteps of the larger. Furthermore, is it not often stated that agglutination is common to the less advanced languages?

[249] It is a fact that in this case also it would seem as if the peoples who utilize this recourse are the least advanced -- actually this is very far from the truth.

In short, every language system has its weak points, which nevertheless do not detract from their basic usefulness among those who utilize it. It was therefore proper for me to accept this

While on this subject of postpositions, let the reader not marvel on seeing that in Mataco the order is completely different from our own. On the contrary, the shoe is on the other foot for it would be more to the point if he marvelled at our usage, for this business of suffixing the particles which we prefix must be considered as having been the universal norm at one time.

So it is that in German and in English, but especially in the former [271] the transposition of prepositions is quite frequent and is one of the elements which most contribute to language elegance -- not to speak of difficulty for those who wish to learn it starting from one of the so-called Latin group. At least the main difficulty lies there in my opinion, without mentioning the dissimilarity of the words themselves.

In Latin we have examples of prepositional transposition in the following: nobiscum, vobiscum, tecum, mecum and in the interchangeable position of such words as "versus, it being possible to say "I am going 'Romam versus' and 'versus Romam'." And this sort of usage carries over even to conjunctions so that one may say Senatus atque Populus Romanus or Senatus Populusque Romanus which has remained as Rome's famous motto. In Italian we have meco and feco to which the Spanish pleonasm con-migo and con-tigo correspond.

The examples which I have just cited can, in my opinion, be considered as vestiges of preexistant forms.

In South America's Indian languages, postpositions rather than prepositions are the order of the day, and the contrary is only an exception, at least in Quichua and Guarani, which have only postpositions, and in Araucano which makes use of both forms. The above mentioned Indians, together with the Matacos and savage Chaco and Central tribes, occupy all of South America.

May it not be that this form is more useful than ours in contributing to a quick perception of ideas, the main term being expressed first while the changeable particle is attached later? Of course, one of these small particles does not retard appreciation of the relation between the two terms very much, but nevertheless, if we go back and look at the period in which languages had their birth, does it not seem more natural to give first place to the concrete objects and only then express the relationship between them?

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK 6

C 581 584 or whom she only wants for a temporary lover. Above all she wants as a husband a man who treats her well and possesses the qualities necessary to support the future family. Since the Choroti to a great extent live by fishing, skill in this art is naturally reckoned among a man's most praiseworthy qualities. Importance is also attached to skill in gardening and hunting. Consequently, when a young man is courting a girl, he tries to gain her favour by presenting her with fish in abundance. I was told that when several men are courting the same girl — which naturally is often the case — the man who brought her the largest quantities of fish had the greatest chance of gaining preference.

C. 581 593 Thus among the Choroti, marriage is from a man's point of view an important matter. When the parents send out their young son to take part in the dances and to find a wife, they follow his undertaking with the keenest interest. Every evening the father shakes his magical rattle gourd (*pelīte*) in order to promote his son's enterprise and »hurry on» the girls on his behalf. When the rattle gourd is used for such practical purposes the ceremony is called *nekeőlitse simă*, which literally means: »to shake the rattle to get (or obtain) something».

C 585 Apart from these ceremonies in connection with courtship, there are no particular marriage rites, except the necessary drinking-bout which accompanies all family feasts and in which only the men take part. The young couple are without any further ceremony regarded as married, but marriage is not fully complete until a child is born.

M [171] [562] 527 836 584 Among the *Mataco*, marriages are not particularly contracted in connection with the dances, but conditions are the same as among the Choroti in so far as the women play the active part both as concerns incidental amorous relations and marriages proper. The great drinking-feasts during the algaroba season are the occasions when a woman enters into temporary or permanent relation with a man. When the men are intoxicated, the girls avail themselves of the opportunity, seize the youths whom they like by the hands and take them to their houses where they spend the night with them. These liaisons lead in many cases to real marriages.

M 585 789 535 When marriage is agreed upon, it is celebrated with the usual ceremonies which have a religious significance. The drum, the most important magical instrument of the Mataco, is beaten the whole night with a view to keeping off evil spirits from the couple. Similarly, a ceremonial dance, called *Nahútsak*, is performed in the evening. It is a ring-dance much like the marriage dance *Avúshe* of the Choroti. The couple being married are seated in the middle of the ring and their friends dance and chant around

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12

CHAPTER VI.

Birth customs.

M 843 Various customs are practised at the birth of a child, many of which are of a religious significance, their aim being to protect the new-born child and its mother against supernatural dangers. Both the ideas and the practices to which they give rise are much the same among the Choroti, the Mataco, and the Tobas. As soon as the Indian woman feels herself to be pregnant she begins to observe certain rules with regard to her diet. She generally abstains from eating meat, contenting herself with maize and certain leaves. The Toba women during this time take particular T [843] care not to eat fish. and with other kinds of animal food she is cautious. Thus if she eats the paunch or the intestines of a cow she will fall ill and birth will be rendered more difficult. When the child arrives, it is washed in water, the umbilical cord is cut off with a snail's shell and guarded for M 844 some time with great care. If the cord were cut off with a knife, the child, it is believed, would soon die. No iron instrument must come in contact with the new-born babe. Again, the navel-string cut off must be guarded until the navel wound is perfectly healed. If it is thrown away prematurely, this would be the same as throwing away the life of the child, which would die in consequence. The umbilical cord, according to the idea of M the Indians, remains in some mysterious connection with the new-born ● [171] child. These ideas are found among all Pilcomayo tribes, but they seem to be common to all South American Indians living in a state of nature.

The rites and ceremonies taking place after the little one has arrived all depend on the belief of the Indians that there is a very intimate connection between the child and its mother, and that both of them are badly exposed to the attacks of evil spirits. Fully to understand them and the behaviour of the woman in child-bed we must first of all take into consideration that the Indian woman in general bears children with great

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)193? SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

ease, without suffering much pain. From the point of view of the savage it is of special importance that this should be so. As the *Choroti* explained the matter to me: if at the birth the woman is ill, this is due to her being possessed by an evil spirit, and the demon, owing to the close connection between mother and child, will also take possession of the latter causing it to fall ill and die. Hence the weakness and sickness from which possibly she is suffering must be concealed and reasoned away. The Choroti have a stereotyped phrase to express this: *lasihe ĩse lóuet = lahse ihe, eis lóuet*, that is: »when the child is born, the mother is well». As a matter of fact, a few hours after the delivery the Choroti woman is seen to move about doing some small tasks in the house, fetching water, preparing food, and so on. In short, she acts as if she were quite hearty, thus deceiving herself, her relatives, and the evil spirits. But the curious thing is that among the Choroti the *father* of the child, seemingly instead of the mother, lies in bed, looks weak, fasts, and is attended by the women, in short, behaves just as if he were the person who had given birth to the child and were suffering pains. The precaution which the woman shares with her husband, in addition to abstaining from hard work, is that she has to diet. Like him she avoids meat, limiting her diet to boiled and mashed maize, the leaves of certain trees and certain other vegetables.

This is the custom generally known under the name of *la couvade* (»hatching») and which among the Choroti exists in its most typical form. The father remains lying in bed for five or six days, or *until the navel-wound of the child is perfectly healed*. The reason for this is quite obvious and was, besides, expressly pointed out to me by the Indians. The navel-wound may become a dangerous source of infection, and the new-born child is in its most delicate condition during the first days or until the navel-wound is healed.

Before I give further explanations of the ideas underlying the couvade practices I shall say a few words about the birth customs of the Mataco and the Tobas. These tribes do not practice couvade in the proper sense of the word, but they have the same ideas about an intimate connection existing between the new-born child and both parents.

What I have stated as to the birth customs of the Choroti also holds true of those of the *Mataco*, with the exception that the Mataco father does not actually lie in bed. He has nevertheless to take certain precautions, and the fact that he pretends to be in a delicate condition during the first critical days of his child's life is shown by the expression the Mataco use of him. He is said to have an *aíttah limpáh*, that is to say.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI/2

T- 535 789 A peculiarity of the *Nomí* is that it is the only Toba dance which takes place in the day-time; in fact, it is *always* performed during the day, just as other dances are always performed at night. Of the reason of this I am not quite sure, but it is probably to be sought in the particular character of the dance. Most Indian dances are in their nature conjurations of evil spirits, and since these spirits move about especially at night, it is conceivable that the dances are, as a rule, night ceremonies. The dance *Nomí* again, chiefly has for its object the promotion of fertility and the ripening of the algaroba fruit and therefore takes place in the day, just as the Choroti dances, in so far as they have the same object, often take place in the day. It is true that the *Nomí* is also intended to conjure the ghosts of the dead, but these differ from other spirits precisely in that they are generally believed to visit their living relatives in the day-time, when the drinking-feasts are celebrated.

T [775]

M 789 535 The Mataco also have their festival dance, which in their language is called *Nakātin* or *Katináh*. It corresponds exactly to the Toba dance *Nomí*, and is performed during the algaroba season with the same object, namely, to secure an abundant harvest and to keep off the spirits of the dead, called *kasītah* by the Mataco.

M 171 Whether the Mataco have been influenced in this festival dance by their neighbours the Tobas, with whom they have considerable intercourse, I cannot say, but the idea that the dead like to visit the living at the time of the harvest and at the great drinking-feasts, is certainly familiar to many South American tribes. Thus the *Avas* and the *Chané*, who now live on the western border of the Chaco, but came originally to these regions from the north and cannot be reckoned among the Chaco tribes proper, especially practise dancing at their drinking-feasts. Since on this particular point there is an interesting analogy between the customs of the Avas and those of the Chaco tribes, I shall mention what I know about the drinking-feasts of the Avas and the Chané. Their sacred drink is maize beer, called *cangüi* in the Guarani language, which exactly corresponds to the sacred beers brewed from the algaroba and some other fruits in the Chaco. The *cangüi* festivals of the Avas as well as the dance performed in connection with them have been described by the Catholic missionaries, but none of them seems to have realized the religious significance of these ceremonies. The majority of these Indians are now Christians in name and strongly influenced by Christian civilization, having consequently dropped or greatly modified many of their ancient customs. I myself have only witnessed their

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Toba 5112
Choroti 5K6

eating of fish at the beginning of the wet season is likely to cause malarial fever. What is particularly dangerous in the fish, as the Indians told me, is the stomach; an evil spirit may hide in it. Therefore a person must abstain from eating this kind of food when he or she is in a delicate condition and exposed to the attacks of supernatural enemies. After a death it is the death-demon that is believed to have possibly taken up its abode in the stomach of the fish. In general, the rules of diet, both in regard to fish and in regard to other kinds of food, are always more strict for the women than for the men, and this is naturally due to the belief that the former have by nature less power of resistance against evil spirits than the latter.

Several other food restrictions exist among the Chaco tribes, and most of them are due to superstitious ideas of one kind or another. Just as the Choroti shun the meat of the deer, so I found among the Toba men an aversion to the meat of the wild pig, although this is a very tasty food. This may possibly be due to the idea that the wild pig is a »female» animal, as is also the armadillo. At any rate the Tobas have the belief that the souls of women particularly reincarnate themselves in the wild pig. All Chaco Indians likewise have an aversion to drinking the blood or milk of animals and eating the eggs of hens and of other birds. The Indians could give me no explanation as to this superstition, and it is possible that the original reasons for it are now forgotten. It is, however, highly probable that they shun blood and milk because they believe that the spirit or soul of the animal is in them. This is at any rate quite obvious with regard to blood, which plays an important part in native superstition. Thus among all tribes there appears a mysterious dread of shedding the blood of domestic animals. The Choroti for instance, when they have to slaughter a sheep or goat, never kill the animal by cutting its throat or shedding its blood in some other way, but always, according to old observance, by strangulation. The custom is professedly observed for fear of coming in contact with the blood of the animal. — For a similar reason, I believe, the Indians have originally abstained from eating eggs. The egg is the embryo of the bird, and in the embryo or foetus of an animal, according to primitive belief, its spirit has its abode in the same way as in its blood or milk. It is interesting in this connection to note what Mr. Grubb says of the analogous ideas of the Lenguas. »Milk, whether of the cow, goat, sheep, or mare, is never drunk. The older people seem to consider it unfit for them, and children are forbidden it because it is supposed that the milk upon which they

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 S17 Mataco S17

171 are nourished will influence them physically as well as in character, and the Indians have no desire that their children should in any way acquire the natures of such animals.[1])

262 826 774 The fear of eating the *heads* of certain animals is probably due to similar ideas. A menstruous woman, as we have seen, is forbidden to eat the head of a parrot, lest she should go mad or be changed into a tiger; and similarly a father, while he is observing the rules of the couvade, must abstain from eating the head of a cow. According to primitive belief the soul or vital power of the body is particularly concentrated in the hair and the head. That the head of a cow is especially regarded as taboo is comprehensible from the fact that animals imported by the whites are generally looked upon with superstitious fear and their flesh avoided by Indians still living in a state of nature.

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[1]) Grubb, *op. cit.* p. 137.

primitiveness more accentuated than that of other tribes. They are among the dirtiest peoples of South America, and in the sense of cleanliness they are inferior to the Toba. 181 [516]

Matako material culture does not differ markedly from that of any of the other Chaco tribes. Their weapons are the same, their houses of the common beehive type, and their craftsmanship is hardly distinguishable from that of their neighbors. Judged outwardly, the Matako might be confused with the mass of Chaco cultures. A keen observer notices a slight superiority in the agriculture of the Matako,as compared with the Toba. The distinctive character of Matako culture may only be appreciated in contrast with that of the Toba-Pilagá. While the Matako are generally peaceful the Toba are warlike and have almost always been the conquerors in the far distant regions. However, it cannot be said that the Matako have not also fought bravely against their enemies or that they are lacking in military tradition. Still the contrast between them is striking even to an observer like myself who has spent only a short time among these Indians. The difference between these apparently identical cultures lies primarily in the stressing of religion and magic among the Matako in contrast with the relative unimportance of like interests among the Toba. Although built on the same pattern as that of the Toba, the culture of the Matako is interwoven with ceremonial activities, ritual dances, and expulsion of spirits. It is almost impossible to stay with a group of Matako more than one day without having the opportunity to attend some ceremony. The traditional blowing of medicine-men upon the sick occurs among the Matako as among other Chaco tribes. It is always associated with dances together with spells of magic and has rarely the individual character of the same ceremony among the Toba. Not only are the peformances of Matako medicine-men more impressive than those of other tribes in the same area, the external appearance of the medicine-man and his assistants denotes the great importance given to ritual details and 171 ● 105

accessories. The performers wear red wool frontlets trimmed with feathers on their heads, on their waists are feather belts, and rattles are tied on their feet. The magical power is attributed to every ornament, a belief less apparent among other Indians. So far as I know the Matako are the only Chaco tribe in which the medicine-men use narcotics. They use as snuff a powder made from the seeds of the *sebil* and through its use produce a state of trance during which their souls wander through the upper world. They wage collective war against disease and spirits and all of the ceremonies have a highly symbolical character. The Matako are very keen observers of taboos, mourning, for instance, is to them a very serious matter. This general interest in religion and the stress of religious beliefs in the native culture reveals itself in the Matako attitude toward Christianity. It is the general opinion of all of the missionaries with whom I discussed the question that the Matako are most eager to accept protestantism and that those who take the new faith do so seriously. They are not only interested in the exterior manifestations of religion, but they understand perfectly the moral problems and the subtilities of faith. The Matako who ask for baptism do so because they feel a genuine need for religion and the converted Indians do their best to adapt their living to new rules. The attitude of the Toba is quite different. They are amused by religion, they realize the help to be obtained from the missionaries, but they do not worry over much about the faith itself. They are light-hearted and and apathetic toward religion. The contrast between the two tribes has always impressed me and I noticed it immediately when I started to inquire about medicine-men. Information proffered by the Matako was always more detailed and extensive than that given by the Toba. The importance of religion to the Matako is not only revealed in spiritual crises; in the soul of a new convert modern religion affects his old life deeply.

000 I am aware that the ethnological material I gathered

3: Metraux .E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

duction of these tales to the Matako is quite recent since the Indians have been in regular touch with white settlers for only thirty or forty years.

The most important character in the Matako tales is familiar to all students of North American ethnology — he is the Trickster. His Matako name is *Takxwax*, *Tokxwax* or *Tawkxwax*, according to the region. The last form which I have adopted is used at Algarrobal, near Embarcación. My two informants agreed that *Tawkxwax* was a »loco» a fool and by this word they meant a practical joker, a person who likes to play harmful tricks on people. The bad people in the region were always referred to as »locos». The adventures of *Tawkxwax* strongly suggest those of the famous tricksters of North American ethnology. The resemblance is even more accentuated in the tales of other tribes. In the mythology of the Toba Pilagá the tricks or the adventures are attributed to the fox who is the South American equivalent of the Coyote. The perfect parallels between the stories concerning *Tawkxwax* and those in which the fox is the hero are so numerous and striking that I often tried to make the Matako confess that *Tawkxwax* was the fox of the other tribes. They always denied my identification and insisted that *Tawkxwax* was a man.

Everyone familiar with North American folklore will recognize in these tales many similarities between the Chaco tales and those which constitute the rich oral literature of North American tribes. I am too little acquainted with North American ethnology to draw parallels but no doubt they are numerous. The essential part played by the Trickster in mythology is a feature which cannot be neglected. Parallels between North American and South American Indian tales will be more obvious when I am able to issue the mythology of the Toba Pilagá that I had the opportunity to study more systematically and thoroughly than the Matako. The Matako mythology is only a short introduction to a more rich and complete material.

I must stress here that the material and the spiritual culture of the Chaco tribes — half nomadic, living on mesquite, game and fish — recalls many of the conditions prevailing among North American tribes, especially those in California and certain aspects of these of the prairies. Most of the parallels which have been drawn between North American and South American ethnology rest on the culture of the very tribes among whom I was lucky enough to get the tales which I present here.

Once more I should like to call the attention of ethnologists to the abundance of material which still may be collected in South America. For a few years more there will remain the opportunity to study primitive Indian cultures functioning in their entirety. But the extraordinary riches of South American ethnology are being wasted and lost. Every year sees the passing of a tribe or of a culture. Old medicine-men, knowing the traditions of their groups, die without transmitting their knowledge. Thus the chances of scrutinizing the past culture of America grow fewer each year. South America is the least known of all the continents and its tribes are the most mysterious peoples. May I give the alarm before it is too late to grasp the now plentiful material?

Unfortunately I had little opportunity to study the phonetics of the Matako language, and I am convinced that my transcriptions might be improved. I used the following system of transcription for the native words.

č is more or less like the Spanish »ch», but slightly palatalized.

x is a surd velar fricative.

k is an aspirated back palatal.

L is the voiceless »l».

ʔ stands for the glottal stop. Glottalized consonants though existing in Matako, do not appear in the words quoted in this paper. The vowel *a* has a different quality according to the region. Along the Pilcomayo is *a* a mid-back narrow sound quite near the open »o».

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

762 the victim awaits death. It is said that some men take poison to blackmail a woman into complying with their wishes.

It has been noticed time and again that only young people eat sachasandia as a rule. Among the cases cited above there is only one of an elderly woman who attempted to take her life. In this connection, the question arises of whether suicides are more common among women than among men. No data on this point have been gathered, but it is the impression of the missionaries that suicide is equally common among men and women with perhaps a slight majority among women. The first problem raised by the frequency of these suicides is whether the suicides are caused by new conditions of life —by culture clash and lack, of adjustment to a new world— or whether they were equally frequent formerly when the native culture still functioned? Since no Matako group now lives in its earlier surroundings, the truth of the matter will be difficult to learn. If the problem is presented to the missionaries who are largely responsible for the disappearance of the Indian culture, they always insist that suicides were one of the worst manifestations of the culture before the Indians were saved. They point out, moreover, that the number of suicides was particularly high at the time when the missionaries began their work in the region, and they establish a close relation between suicide and dancing. One of the missionaries wrote to me: "In the old days when the Indians were still dancing, there used to be as many as a dozen attempted suicides in one day, resulting in my being up most of the night going from one to another. They were so many and so frequent, however, and it happened so long ago that I can remember none in detail". This evidence is confirmed by other missionaries who recall that the worst epidemics always occured in connection with the night dances which have a decidedly sexual character. At such times young married men who took part in the entertainments slept with girls, thus arousing the jealousy of their wives and the anger of their mothers-in law. If as a result one or two people committed suicide, others would follow their example.

762 762 178 [797] 762 535 178 [837]

The link established between night dances and suicide was the main reason for the strict tabu against dancing which is now enforced in every mission. Indians have been made so aware of the evil of dancing that even little girls have been kept from their normal and charming jumping about. Missionaries, however, are not responsible for this measure; it has been self-imposed by the Indians.

762 171

No cases of suicide are known among other tribes who live in the same region and under similar conditions. At any rate, I have never

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been told about a Toba or a Pilaga who killed himself. Apparently, suicide is a culture trait restricted to the Matako.

Can this pathological condition be attributed to the life in the mission and to the discipline imposed upon the natives who have shown willingness to become Christians? The psychological motivation for conversion is undoubtedly fear of the white men and hunger. The missions are a buffer between the Indians and the ruthless white colonists. In the missions the Indians find jobs and, in case of distress, food. They also receive free medical treatment. The price they must pay for these privileges is to give up dancing and drinking, to abandon warfare and native sports and to forget shamanism. In addition they are expected to go to church twice daily and the children and many adults spend part of the day in school. Life under such conditions is extremely dull. All the activities that made life worth while disappear unless they can secretly play hockey or indulge in a drinking bout. This, of course, they quite frequently do. Although their present situation can explain their indifference, their anxieties and their lack of attachment to life, can the mission discipline be held responsible for the Metako suicidal mania?

In six of the cases cited above, marital maladjustment was blamed for the suicide attempt. In one case, the suicide was attributed to lack of sexual gratification. One couple attempted suicide because of the insults showered upon them by an angry and frustrated woman. One case may be ascribed both to sexual maladjustment and fear (the case of Martin). Criticism by neighbors is the cause in one instance. In only one case that of the old woman who had lost her son, can grief be considered the determining reason for the suicide.

In addition, there is no doubt that suicide among these people has a decidedly aggressive character. The Matako use suicide as a threat; by killing themselves, they punish the person who has offended them. The punitive character of suicide leads to the problem of aggression and aggressiveness among these people. In daily life little direct aggression is shown in their mutual relations. There are almost no quarrels; ordinarily men are not harsh to the women. Children are coddled and are seldom scolded. Nevertheless, strong aggresive tendencies exist. Whoever has witnessed a hockey party on the Pilcomayo loses any illusion he may have had about the gentleness and softness of Matako manners. In its brutality and fierceness each hockey party resembles a pitched battle. The Indians paint themselves and dress as if they were getting ready to face a real enemy. The teams are formed by men who are related by blood or who live in the same community. The adversaries are frequently members of bands which are on unfriendly

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most that can be said is that the mania found a suitable climate for continuation in that atmosphere of disintegration and pessimism. It must be remembered that similar crises have been observed from the very beginning of the missionary era. It may well be, therefore, that suicide was an institutionalized form of protest under the conditions of the earlier culture undertaken for some concrete reason by one individual who could not otherwise effectively punish members of the in-group, and followed by others whose desires were kindled by the first example.

Suicides seem to have occurred with relative frequency among the Kaingang who were gathered on a reservation in the State of Sao Paulo. Since in certain cases they seem to have been caused by analogous situations to those found among the Matako, the following passage by Manizer may be of interest: "Suicides caused by family quarrels are very common. I know of several cases: Cagndiri attempted to hang herself because of some affair with her husband's brother; for that reason she was expelled from home. Vangrikuiix tried to hang herself when her husband planned to abandon her. Naxo's wife hanged herself to death because of an affair with her husband's brother, quite a young man. Old Karege's son killed himself by hanging after a quarrel with his wife who had refused to eat palmito which he had brought back trom the forest. There were two other cases of suicide during the two years the Kaingang were under supervision." [1]

The cases of suicide among South American natives listed by Wise, in his book "Selbstmord und Todesfurcht bei den Naturvolkern" (Zutphen, 1933) are based on vague references in the travel literature of the last century and as a rule are valueless for science.

[1] Les Kaingangs, 23th International Congress of Americanists, New York, 1928, p. 760–761.

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Matacos or Noctenes

M 131 648 This tribe is also very numerous; it lives on the right bank of the Pilcomayo River, occupying the part opposite the zone occupied by the Toba, with whom they maintain friendly relations which are disturbed from time to time, especially at the time when the algarrobas and other fruits ripen.

M 797 179 A group of these Indians in times past formed a part of the San Antonio del Pilcomayo Mission, where today the Chaco Delegation is located, occupying the mission buildings. But because they are as fickle, or perhaps more so, than the Toba, Religion and the State could make little progress with such Indians.

M 131 197 648 T 186 These Indians are very numerous and in small groups extend as far as the shores of the Bermejo; their language is totally different from that of the other tribes and they hardly mix, although they maintain friendly relations with the Toba, to whom they are considered to be inferior.

M 181 578 273 Their physiognomy is overly languid; sadness can be read in their faces, and they are very miserable; nevertheless they are ferocious in war, in jealousy, or in a state of drunkenness; they injure and kill one another. Out of these considerations the women refrain from drinking to the state of inebriation in order to prevent their husbands' disorders and to hide the weapons in the event of the outbreaks which frequently occur (1).

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1. In the drinking bouts they are the same as the Toba; they make a mead from the fruits of the algarroba, which is almost as intoxicating as brandy; they also make mead from other wild fruits; they do not make chicha because they hardly plant maize.

M 181 721 648 They are more peaceful Indians than the Toba, are not very warlike, and do not attack the houses of the whites but profit when they can from the latter's cattle, especially should a famine break out due to a lack of wild fruits.